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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MONTERREY 000307

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [SNAR](#) [SOCI](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: LOCAL LEADERS STRUGGLE WITH HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES; CULTURE OF
LAWFULNESS PROGRAMS VIEWED AS LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

REF: A) MONTERREY 274, B) MONTERREY 218

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REASON: 1.4 (b)

11. (C) Summary: A joint military/Nuevo Leon state operation to detain 21 San Pedro police officers (including a commander in the city's command and control center) on corruption charges has shocked many in the affluent Monterrey suburb and further contributed to eroding public confidence in local authorities. City leaders now find themselves enmeshed in a debate as to what type of support to offer to the detained officers, as some have had their legal rights violated, some may have been mistreated by state authorities while in custody, and some may be innocent.

As the state, buttressed by the military, continues its campaign to cleanse the various municipal police forces in the region, other cities will likely find themselves facing similar situations. Meanwhile, both government and industry leaders seeking to bolster the rule of law are now looking at NAS-funded Culture of Lawfulness Project (COLP) programs to strengthen overall transparency in the long-term. In an August 5 session, COLP staffer Dr. Heath Grant met with civil society leaders to coordinate possible joint efforts targeted at police officers, crime victims, students, and the public at large. The COLP is pushing for a follow-up meeting with business executives, perhaps on the margins of the September 2-4 Border Governor's Conference in Monterrey. End summary.

Arrest of Police Officers Engenders a Host of Problems

12. (C) San Pedro city leaders are finding that the effort to clean-up local police forces has confronted them with difficult decisions in terms of human rights. At an informal August 5 session of the San Pedro Citizens Advisory Council on Public Security, held in the wake of the Nuevo Leon state police's arrest of 21 San Pedro officers on suspicion of collaborating with the Beltran Leyva cartel (reftel A), attendees told the Consul General that one officer has been released, four have confessed, and 16 continue to assert their innocence. City officials note, however, that the state has disregarded judicial orders issued governing the officers' detention and that, according to the defendants' lawyers, some of their clients have been beaten and tortured while in Nuevo Leon state custody.

13. (C) San Pedro officials are uncertain what to do next. First, all of the officers detained had passed the city's confidence screening tests, thereby casting doubt on the reliability of that process. Second, as arrested police

officers from all over the metro region are being processed at the State Police Academy, municipal police forces have been unable to train new officers there and are beginning to lose manpower due to normal attrition rates. Third, and most importantly, there is a debate among officials as to what stance to take vis-à-vis the detained officers.

¶4. (C) Some note that, given morale concerns, it will be difficult to establish a top-quality police force if the city does not support officers who suffer mistreatment while in custody for an offense which they have not yet been convicted of. Others point out that, given the public's fervent desire to clean up the local police, citizens likely would not accept the use of city monies to defend possible narco-police. (The original arrests were based, at least in part, on the officers' names appearing on a payoff list seized during a law enforcement raid.)

¶5. (C) Further complicating the picture is the widespread suspicion among city fathers that the real motive behind the active state role is the desire to smear the municipality's model C4 command and control center prior to the state opening up its own facility. The current San Pedro Mayor and the Mayor-elect belong to the PAN party; the current Nuevo Leon state governor and the Governor-elect belong to the PRI.

COLP Programs Emphasize Rule of Law

¶6. (C) Meanwhile, On August 5, the Consul General, PolOff, and Culture of Lawfulness Project (COLP) manager Heath Grant met with Mauricio Ramos, a respected security expert working with the private industry funded anti-kidnapping organization "Planning Consultants," based in Monterrey. Ramos heads a recently-created business effort aimed at bolstering the capabilities of the state's anti-kidnapping unit, pushing for changes in the state's governing penal code, and promoting

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greater transparency and civic awareness (reftel B). Grant, whose organization is funded under the Merida Initiative, discussed the possibility of COLP collaboration with Ramos' organization.

¶7. (C) Grant outlined both the scope of COLP's current efforts in Nuevo Leon, working with school children, the state police, and San Pedro, and major elements of COLP's programs. He noted the value of reinforcing in children the importance of the rule of law with projects as basic as a movement against neighborhood graffiti or instruction on how the purchase of pirated media supports criminal organizations. Grant also discussed COLP successes in Sicily, Colombia and Hong Kong as well as an ongoing project in the Mexican state of Baja California.

¶8. (C) He cautioned that such projects can take time before attaining success, often 10 to 20 years. Institutions, such as the media and churches, must be engaged in the fight against the corrupting influence of the drug traffickers for any chance of success, Grant observed. For example, he pointed to the positive effect of pronouncements by the Italian church denouncing organized crime.

Outcome Dependent on Civil and Institutional Involvement

¶9. (C) Ramos appeared receptive and agreed that success depended on participation of government officials, business and institutions. The education effort, he said, had to be targeted at youth (citing the statistic that 18-25 year olds commit 76% of the violent crimes in Mexico), crime victims (urging them to report incidents to the authorities), the police (explaining how collaborating with organized crime could ultimately come back to haunt them), and, of course, the general public.

¶10. (C) Currently, Ramos stated, the general public had little confidence in the ability of Mexican authorities to provide protection as many institutions are riddled with corruption. Two recent kidnappings of high-profile San Pedro figures had further shaken society. Some wealthy individuals had brought in elements to try to locate and eliminate the kidnapping gangs, he said, but this type of vigilante activity only detracted from the rule of law and created further problems down the road.

Possible Future Steps

¶11. (C) For now, Ramos is moving ahead with his organization's anti-kidnapping program. He plans to meet with Governor-elect Rodrigo Medina in the upcoming week to discuss the planned assistance for the state's anti-kidnapping unit. He agreed to continue discussions with COLP, perhaps as early as the September 2-4 Border Governor's Conference, an event which COLP officials may attend.

Comment

¶12. (C) All concerned here, i.e., federal, state, and local leaders, recognize that, ultimately, civil society will have to become involved if Nuevo Leon is to be successful in freeing itself from the influence of organized crime. What bedevils elected officials, however, is the need for short-term action to improve security in view of the reality that transparency and rule of law programs can only yield significant results in the long-term.

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